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ABSTRACT

These proceedings of a workshop on the role of adult education in the development of rural areas consists of a report on the workshop, general conclusions drawn at the workshop, and its recommendations on future works. Discussed in the workshop report are the analysis of the situation in rural areas and specific development needs of rural areas, objectives assigned to adult education in the development of rural areas, human and financial resources, and adult expectations. Features of the rural situation that create needs for development, operations/activities of adult education in rural development, and resources for adult education are the focus of a summary of general conclusions drawn at the workshop. Covered in the workshop recommendations on future work are projects of rural development in areas without highly developed education networks, innovative projects in the field of urban areas, the role of problems relating to environmental protection, and ways to intensify interaction networks. The conference agenda and list of conference participants are appended. (MN)

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

European network of interaction projects
in adult education

REPORT

of the Workshop on

"ADULT EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT"

(Strasbourg, 11-12 December 1980)

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CONTENTS

		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP	2
	by Martine Bernard, ADEP, France	
III.	GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	8
	by Walter James, Open University, United Kingdom	
IV.	WORKSHOP'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUTURE WORK	11
Appendix 1 :	AGENDA	12
Appendix 2 :	LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	i

I. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the documents produced as a result of the workshop held in Strasbourg on 11 and 12 December 1980 on the role of adult education in the development of rural areas.

The purpose of the workshop was to consider the experience gained from the European interaction network projects in rural areas and to draw initial conclusions from it.

The group of participants discussed the projects visited in Sardinia and the region around Salerno in Italy, the project on "multi-occupational training in the Southern Alps" in France, and the projects in various rural areas of Denmark. The seminar on local development officers held in Strasbourg in November 1980 was also taken into consideration (CC-GP3 (80) 29).

II. REPORT

by Martine Bernard

Themes of the workshop

The workshop focused on four main themes:

- analysis of the situation in rural areas and their specific development needs,
- the objectives assigned to adult education in the development of rural areas,
- human and financial resources,
- adults' expectations.

Work was also done on the methods of the interaction network, in particular co-operative monitoring, the conclusions of which are set out in the workshop's final recommendation.

1. Analysis of the situation in rural areas and their specific development needs

People in rural areas have a significantly lower level of formal education than people in urban areas. The demographic problems encountered there (low population density due to the drift away from the countryside) result in school closures and a shortage of more advanced education facilities.

Furthermore, schools project an urban and industrial model of life. The image of the family and economic activity presented in school textbooks may be old-fashioned and countrified, but the curriculum as a whole shows advancement to be a question of learning specialist occupations that can be followed in an urban, industrial environment.

The mass media also help to enhance the image of success in an urban, industrial environment. As a result, the youngest and most active members of rural communities do not always see any likelihood of change or development in their regions and move to the towns or emigrate to find jobs or achieve some degree of social success.

This brief survey should not, however, give the impression that there are radical differences between urban and rural areas. Isolation, the absence of opportunity to shoulder responsibility through projects and the population's lack of control over its destiny are problems that are common to both types of area.

We must now take a closer look at the specific questions raised and the solutions found in each of these situations.

2. The objectives assigned to adult education in the development of rural areas

Adult education in the context described should enable rural communities:

- to rediscover their cultural and social identity and achieve greater unity,

- to prepare themselves to perform and manage the activities necessary for a specific kind of economic and social development,

- to take their destiny in hand.

2.1 To rediscover their cultural and social identity and achieve greater unity

People will able to get a grip on their present once they have reconquered their past. They must recreate a rural culture and social identity which are not old-fashioned and countrified, but dynamic, realistic and enriched with the experience accumulated by successive generations.

This conquest of an identity and culture is a force working against the culture propagated by the élites, the model projected by schools and the urban imitations introduced in rural areas by migrants and the mass media. It may involve the creation of folk museums, the revival of songs and traditions, the mounting of plays and exhibitions, etc.

In this way, village communities achieve greater self-knowledge and unity, people break out of their isolation and the generation gap is bridged. In this last respect, experiments in which schools are opened to parents and adult concerns reflected in school activities are particularly important.

These activities and aspirations are essential for developing the feeling of belonging to a human community and controlling its development. Furthermore, cultural projects of this kind often stimulate social, political and economic change.

2.2 To prepare themselves to perform and manage the activities necessary for a specific kind of economic and social development

- The trend towards desolation and impoverishment in depopulated and deprived rural areas must be halted. For centuries, individuals and families in these areas have had to engage in several occupations simultaneously to survive: farming, house-building, tool-making etc.

  This multi-occupational tradition should therefore be used as the basis for creating new activities consistent with the development of agriculture and the protection of the natural environment. These activities might include tourism, crafts, processing and marketing of local products, and public services: transport and welfare services.

The role of adult education is thus to sustain and develop social life and economic activity.

But this involves devising specific educational methods, for the following three reasons:

. As there are no jobs, education should help to create them. For example, bee-keepers might decide to produce confectionery from honey or craftsmen and farmers might wish to join forces to create sales outlets for their products.

. These new economic projects do not fit in with the types of training provided for standard occupations. They require a combination of technical, commercial, administrative, legal and other knowledge.

. Each of these projects involves a small number of people often scattered over a wide area: education thus takes the form not of a group of learners around a teacher, but of a team of entrepreneurs calling upon various skills as their enterprise proceeds.

Educational experiments of this kind are starting to develop and the Council of Europe has taken note of those being conducted in the Southern Alps (France).

- Examples may also be quoted of projects or activities conducted by the whole of a rural community to improve its social organisation.

For example, some Sardinian villagers decided first to build a road to connect their village to the outside world, then a school to provide education for its inhabitants.

The educators joining these projects have become "builders" too.

- Some projects are not concerned with creating economic and social activities, but with improving the quality of life.

The biodynamic farming project in Campania (Italy) had a more philosophical than economic basis. It proposed to create greater harmony between men and their natural environment and, consequently, to help to resolve the problems of employment and emigration in the region.

2.3 To take their destiny in hand

This objective follows from the two preceding ones and, at the same time, reinforces them. It is based on the principle or assumption that the most important resources are human resources. Educators must enable individuals to think and act for themselves, have confidence in themselves and give expression to their ideas and aspirations.

Adult education is therefore an exchange, not a relationship between dominator and dominated. What makes this all the more important is that, most of the time, people are unaware of the wealth of their imagination, the value of their experience and the extent of their abilities. For the traditional model of education lays emphasis on knowledge, in particular the intellectual kind.

In conclusion, we should note two points which were touched on but not treated in depth during the workshop:

- the workshop dealt mainly with cases of deprived rural areas giving cause for concern in the countries of Southern Europe.

  Yet a new situation is emerging, especially in the Scandinavian countries: the arrival in rural areas of people whose occupations allow them to work independently outside the urban and industrial centres. This phenomenon is bound to increase with the development of telematics and data-processing.

  Some thought should be given to this phenomenon and its implications for education.

- The workshop found that innovative projects were set up as a reaction against national traditions and laws concerning education.

  For example, the Danish project is concerned with responsibility in everyday life and the enrichment of social relations, whereas the official funding structures provide for the setting up of learning groups co-financed by the users and the state.

3. Human and financial resources

The Workshop addressed itself to the problems raised by financial and human resources.

3.1 Financial resources

Funding arrangements must be such as to ensure consistency between resources and the goals pursued:

- financial resources must not come entirely from outside the project, to prevent it from becoming dependent on assistance,

- having a wide range of sources of funds seems to be the best means of guaranteeing the independence of the project and its control by the community.

This prevents the project from being taken over by a single supplier of funds who would tend to want to make his investment produce an economic return according to his own criteria without taking the project's many different facets into account.

3.2 Human resources

As an introduction to this point, the workshop noted that, in adult education in rural areas, an integrated approach to the problems of such areas was developing: adult education can help to solve the community's cultural, social and economic problems.

Moreover, a community does not exist in isolation: it is part of a region and a country.

This fact has a number of implications:

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3.2.1 The divisions and partitions between administrative and technical structures and institutions must be overcome by co-ordination at all levels, local, regional and national.

Educational and training bodies, welfare services, workers' education institutes and cultural institutions and economic agencies cannot continue to ignore one another when they are pursuing the same or quite similar goals. Their different approaches should be as many contributions to helping the population. But that requires real co-ordination.

In this connection, it was observed that national institutions of different kinds, which accordingly approached adult education from different angles, were represented at the workshop.

Thus, Denmark was represented by a recreational body, Italy by an association of popular education, France by a public institution working in the economic and social fields, Portugal by its Ministry of Education, etc. But in each of these countries with their specific characteristics there are also structures with different aims.

3.2.2 In the approach to education as an instrument of cultural, social and economic development, the basis for the educational strategies adopted is that the persons concerned express their needs and take responsibility for finding solutions.

However, these needs may contradict or conflict with regional and national priorities and policies. There has to be liaison between the different levels to secure the reconciliations necessary for implementation of the projects.

Furthermore, the problem differs somewhat according to the size and administrative structure of the country concerned, in so far as the social and geographical distance between the local, regional and national levels is greater in some countries than in others.

3.2.3 The need for liaison and consistency between administrative and technical institutions and between different levels of action involves setting up inter-institutional control machinery and creating new leadership and co-ordination functions. This analysis prompted a number of observations:

- A new kind of educator or leader is emerging and the Council of of Europe's "Development of Adult Education" project has already addressed itself to this problem by organising a seminar on local development officers (background, role and training).

- It often proves necessary to call upon experts to solve technical or complex problems, but that involves a risk of going against the spirit of this type of project: the expert may impose his solutions on the strength of his qualifications without taking account of the experience or views of the persons concerned. Adult education should enable people to use this kind of contribution without being dominated by it.

- The basis for this kind of experiment is that the people concerned take responsibility for solving their problems and that leaders emerge from within the community. The introduction of outside agents or international experts also involves a risk of domination and interference. People from "outside" can, however, act as catalysts, enlighteners and motivators (for a return to the "sources"), for every human community has its notables, its "clientèles", its internal alienations and its obscurantisms. Intervention from outside may therefore have fundamentally different effects according to the form it takes: the grains of sand in an oyster may be a nuisance, but they can also produce a pearl.

- National and regional agencies such as UNLA in Italy or ADEP in France provide some of the necessary co-ordination and mediation between administrative structures and the local, regional, national and even international levels. Yet there is a great risk of their being used to justify any opposition to change or refusal of dialogue among the different structures and levels.

4. Adults' expectations

There are two angles to the problem of motivating adults to learn, which may seem to contradict one another:

- Firstly, adults may refuse education because they think it is beyond them, because it seems too remote from their everyday concerns, or because it brings back more or less unpleasant memories of their initial education.

  In this connection, the workshop noted differences

  . between countries in which the overriding problem is literacy and those in which further education is being tackled,

  . between young adults (14-20) and fully mature persons.

- Secondly, the adult approach to education is to look for a traditional university model which they feel offers them a guarantee of value and reliability, and in so doing they deny their own capabilities and resources.

To remedy this situation, and in the light of the analysis which has been made of the role of adult education in the cultural, social and economic development of rural areas, education must be related to the everyday preoccupations and the aspirations of the people concerned.

III. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

by Walter James

1. Features of the rural situation which create needs for development

People in rural areas have a significantly lower level of formal education leading to much functional illiteracy.

There is the problem of isolation in rural areas, especially in those areas which are not close to cities.

In those areas which are not close to cities and towns, there is the problem of depopulation of the rural areas caused by the drift to the towns, often of the younger, more active members of the rural community.

In many rural areas, there is an acceptance of the situation as it exists, and an absence of any significant planning for development or motivation towards it.

Where development occurs, it is often urban in character and destroys rural communities. Schools for instance take children out of their villages to educate them, and the curriculum they use does not require the development of relationships with the locality.

The advancement model of schools and vocational training provision in rural areas is often urban/industrial in character - teaching specific and specialised skills to individuals, and not helping the development of multiple skills and group methods of working.

Where the mass media are available, they create the impression that they are urban oriented. The images they hold up for imitation are impossible to achieve in many rural environments, and therefore the rural environment is devalued by those who are attracted by the mass media images.

2. The operations/activities of adult education in rural development

It follows from the analysis of the rural situation that adult education must not unwittingly be used to exacerbate that situation. It must not, for instance, contribute to urban depopulation by training people for jobs which they can only perform in towns.

The characteristic activities of adult education can do much to break down isolation and to restore confidence within the framework of a learning group.

But adult education is not an end in itself. Its operations in rural areas have to be closely and directly related to opportunities for economic advancement. It is at its most effective when people are engaged in a project and adult education is necessary for them to succeed in the project.

Adult education can serve the objectives of economic development and cultural development. People cannot fully take hold of their present situation until they have taken hold of their past. There are many ways by which people who have been accustomed to think of themselves as insignificant can give to themselves a sense of positive identity. Drama, song, the rehabilitation of traditional tools and family possessions, the location of folk museums and the mounting of exhibitions are all ways by which people learn about themselves, their village and their forebears.

This recreation of rural cultural and social identity is an especially urgent task in rural areas to which migrants return often bringing urban ideas with them.

The curriculum of this kind of adult education is not to be thought of as a sequence of contents to be studied but as a series of relationships to be experienced and explored.

Among the relationships which it can foster is the relationship of children and adults, if it promotes activities which mingle the generations with each other.

Adult education's task of contributing to social change includes enabling parents to have a closer relationship with schools and to participate in their management.

Wherever possible the alienatory effects of the mass media need to be countered by enabling people to create their own media.

3. The resources for adult education

It is helpful in some contexts to see the adult educator as one person out of many who can act as development agents - concerned to promote development of various kinds as a primary objective and promoting adult education only when it contributes to that development.

The most important resource is the people themselves and this requires the role of educator/development officer to be that of an adviser/consultant. Development often requires the services of specialists and experts, so people must be helped to direct the work of the professionals and not be directed by them.

People are more likely to see themselves as resources when they see people like themselves as adult educators/development agents.

What is of critical importance is that roles of persons are not defined and prescribed. It is functions which have to be identified and then people identified who can perform these functions.

There is, however, a function in some situations for the "alien" from outside; the situation to act as a catalyst to promote the initial reflection or action of people who have been accustomed to accept their situation as unchangeable.

Resources need to be made available from all sources and these separate sources need themselves to work together in an integrated way.

It is particularly important for some agencies to perform the role of intermediary especially when local groups cannot negotiate effectively with national authorities.

It is essential to create open channels or circuits between people and the resources which could be available to them. It is also important for these resources to be distributed between the various levels of locality, region, nation.

There is a problem of creating adequate relationships at the regional level to enable local projects to have appropriate support.

There is also the need for national organisations which promote work at the local level to relate to other national agencies so that the local developments can be comprehensively supported.

There is a particular need, if projects are to develop beyond the pilot or experimental stage, for separate government departments to relate to each other in joint approaches to social policy, otherwise the essential relationships for continuing development will not be formed.

For resources which are allocated at the international or European Community level, there is the need for expertise in making successful applications for these resources to be made available to communities which have need of them. It is important in this connection that these channels of access to resources do not operate in a patronising fashion.

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IV. WORKSHOP'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUTURE WORK

It was agreed to submit the following proposals to the Project Group:

1. It would be advisable to explore more in detail projects of rural development in countries or regions where adult education networks themselves are not highly developed (ie where provision is more recent and/or in the process of being set up) or where those networks are not yet closely integrated with others, in order to evaluate the implications of an integrated approach (with such sectors as health, social services, communications network, economic enterprises, bodies in charge or interested in the protection of the physical environment).

2. A similar study should be initiated, on the basis of proposals coming from member governments, concerning innovatory projects in the field of urban areas (sharing certain common and interlinked problems with rural areas due mainly to their industrial aspects, whether around large or small towns, which draw on the rural population to form their work force) and the contribution of adult education in their overall development, in order to assess more accurately the interrelationship and possible conflicts between the measures to be advocated for both areas.

3. The importance of the problems relating to the protection of the physical environment and ecological balance within rural areas was emphasised. A study of these aspects was also recommended.

4. With regard to the intensification of the interaction network:

   a. the importance of providing adequate written information on projects and their context in particular before visits and other meetings was underlined;

   b. the dissemination of the resulting reports and studies through appropriate channels to interested people was equally important. National correspondents would be useful in this respect;

   c. it would be necessary to determine the status and the level (whether decision-makers, field workers, etc) of those to be involved in the process of co-operative monitoring taking into account the necessary links between these levels;

   d. a special attention should be given to the problem of communication within co-operative monitoring groups; in particular verbal communication should be at an optimum level in order to arrive at a common understanding of problems. However, care should be taken that verbal communication should not be the only criterion specially at the beginning of a long process of co-operative monitoring. It would be therefore essential to take all the necessary technical measures to ensure an adequate level of communication.

APPENDIX I

WORKSHOP ON ADULT EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Strasbourg, 11-12 December 1980
Room 0-14, 9.30 am

DRAFT AGENDA

Thursday, 11 December

- Opening of the meeting
- Introductory statement by the Secretariat
- Statement by the Chairman
- Results of the visits made in 1979 and 1980

Friday, 12 December

- Intensification of interaction network method: co-operative monitoring
- Assessment of practical possibilities
- Conclusions.

A N N E X E II

A P P E N D I X II

L I S T E D E S P A R T I C I P A N T S

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